

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I want to make a few remarks concerning the Senator from Iowa's comments and his three amendment. First, I oppose his VISA program amendment. The amendment would require Maritime Security Fleet Program [MSFP] contractors to participate in Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreements [VISA]. This change is unnecessary. The bill already requires MSFP participants to enter into Emergency Preparedness Agreements [EPA]. EPA is the same as the VISA program, with several improvements suggested and supported by the Defense Department. The Senator's amendment would limit the Department of Defense's ability to access all of a contractor's assets. This would handcuff DOD's ability to tailor commercial sealift assets to meet DOD's sealift needs. The DOD helped write this bill. The bill provides the flexibility DOD wants. Further, it would impose additional restrictions that are not found in the bill or even in the existing VISA program that is voluntary today. This amendment simply does not make sense—it would impose additional costs on moving government goods. It would cost taxpayers more, not less. I hope my colleagues will join me in opposing this amendment.

Second, I oppose his lobbying and campaign contribution amendment. The amendment would prohibit the use of funds provided to Maritime Security Fleet Program [MSFP] contractors from being used to fund lobbying or public education efforts or campaign contributions. This amendment is unnecessary and unfairly singles out one industry with which the Government enters contracts.

Current Government contracting and Federal election campaign laws prohibit the use of Government funds for these purposes. The Byrd amendment, 31 U.S.C. 1352, generally prohibits recipients of Federal contracts, grants, loans, and cooperative agreements from using appropriated funds for lobbying the executive or legislative branches of the Federal Government in connection with a specific contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement. There is absolutely no legal basis for restricting the lawful activities of the employees of the recipients, as suggested by the Senator from Iowa. A logical extension of this suggestion would be to restrict the lawful activities of the contractor's fuel supplier or ice cream vendor. Any attempt to change current lobbying and campaign contribution restrictions should be broader in scope so as to treat all such recipients of Federal funds in a similar and fair manner. I intend to move to table this amendment.

Finally, Mr. President, as I said earlier, I am opposed to the Senator from Iowa's amendment on rates. All of these amendments are designed to kill the bill. They are killer amendments. I intend to move to table the Senator's amendment on rates. The managers of the bill will also move to table the sec-

ond degree amendment to that amendment that has been proposed by the other Senator from Iowa. The second degree amendment is just as objectionable as the underlying one.

Mr. INOUE. There is no further business?

Mr. STEVENS. Have we had an adjournment order yet?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair has not been informed of that.

Mr. STEVENS. I suggest the absence of a quorum. I will take care of that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I now ask on behalf of the leader there be a period for the transaction of morning business with statements limited to 5 minutes each with the exception of the following: Senator DASCHLE or his designee, 45 minutes; Senator COVERDELL or his designee, 45 minutes; and Senator MURKOWSKI, 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

A SAFETY NET

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, we understand on our side that we are drawing near the most intense period of the 1996 elections, but we feel very strongly that we should set the politics aside for the election process, and here on the floor of the Senate and in the Halls of Congress create a safety net from politics for our soldiers in Iraq and in Bosnia or wherever they may be, for our disaster victims that have just suffered the ravages of the hurricane coming out of the Caribbean in the Atlantic and tearing its way through North Carolina and other regions of our country, and, obviously, for our children and our seniors.

In other words, Mr. President, this is a time to put the people first, the people's business first, to not raise anxiety among the Nation but go ahead and get our business done, get the politics out of these Halls, out of the city, and let those questions be settled by the American people in the actual election process. Once again, we should create a safety net from the political era for our soldiers in Iraq, our disaster victims in the United States, our children, and our seniors.

Mr. President, in that regard, I commend the leaders on our side, the Speaker of the House, Speaker GINGRICH, and the Senate majority leader, TRENT LOTT of Mississippi. Yesterday, they came before the American people, having met with the Republican leadership of the Appropriations Committee, and released the following statement:

We have already made substantial progress on appropriations bills for the 1997 fiscal year, with action completed or virtually completed on nine separate bills. We are committed to reaching an agreement with the administration on the remaining bills and completing congressional action by September 27th.

It is clear that Senate Democrats are using delaying tactics and political stunts designed more for the upcoming election than for the completion of the people's business. We have approached the consideration of these bills in good faith, but we have been met at every turn by gridlock, apparently coordinated by the White House. We refuse to be a part of this game. We believe Congress should complete its business and adjourn.

Given the Democrats' strategy to tie up the Senate floor, House and Senate leaders have decided that the Defense appropriations conference report will be the vehicle for final consideration of all uncompleted appropriation issues. The remaining issues will be resolved through bipartisan negotiations between congressional leaders and the White House.

In addition to reaching agreement with the administration on shared priorities like education and antiterrorism, we are determined to ensure that we quickly provide critical funding for our troops, for coping with recent disasters, and for those who are fighting the critical war on drugs.

While we are committed to reaching an agreement with the administration, we are concerned that we have not yet received complete information on their requests for additional spending. We look forward to active negotiations over the next days leading to final legislation that will complete the work of the Congress and stay within the limits of this year's budget.

Again, it is our goal to put a safety net under our troops, our disaster victims, our children, our seniors, and all the families that represents across our land.

Mr. President, on the other side, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta has admitted that some Democrats would like to force Republicans to stay in Washington longer. That sounds like it is designed strictly for political purposes. Now the other side uses a slogan, "Putting Families First," but if the White House allows these Democrats to force extended legislative days here and confusion and chaos, moving you to a point you would have Government gridlock, they are engaged in politics at the ultimate.

Mr. President, I am reminded that last year was a very difficult period here between the Congress and the President. The President likes to blame the fact that Government came to a close on the Republican Congress. He tends to forget, Mr. President, that he vetoed appropriations bill after appropriations bill. At least, Mr. President, at that time, we were fighting over an absolute core issue in America, whether or not to balance the budget, something that virtually 80 percent of the American people are wanting and demanding—very substantive.

Of late, Mr. President, we have heard—and I will read from an editorial in the Washington Times—that shutdown may have had more to do with politics than substance, too. Everybody